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ABSTRACT

This study investigates females in three fields of academic study thought to be male-dominated, female-dominated, or dominated by neither sex. The women were compared in relation to personality characteristics selected from the subscales of the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule (EPPS) which have been stereotypically associated with masculinity and femininity, as well as on their degree of psychological androgyny defined by the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI). The 185 subjects, consisting of junior and senior women in nine academic departments in a land grant university, were grouped to compose the traditional, non-traditional and neutral fields and were administered both the EPPS and the BSRI. Generally, the data yielded a consistent and integrated pattern when interpreted jointly. The fact that the neutral group was involved to a considerable degree in the comparison tends to suggest that the differentiation between the neutral and traditional groups might have been an artificial one. This suggests that the differences were essentially between the traditional and non-traditional groups as anticipated. (Author/PFS)

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Personality Characteristics and Psychological
Androgyny of Academic Women

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Personality Characteristics and Psychological

Androgyny of Academic Women

The Edwards Personal Preference Schedule (EPPS) and the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) were employed to investigate the relationship between personality characteristics and psychological androgyny for females in traditional (female-dominated), non-traditional (male-dominated) and neutral (dominated by neither men nor women) fields of academic study. The research was designed to assess how psychological androgyny - the degree of flexibility to engage in sex inappropriate behaviors - related to the internalization of stereotypic notions of femininity and masculinity for these groups of females.

The focus of the study was based on some assumptions about females who were traditional and non-traditional in their gender identification. Females in traditional fields were expected to be more "stereotypically" feminine in their general orientation so consequently, expected to score significantly higher on those personality characteristics identified as feminine from the subscales of the EPPS than females who were in the non-traditional fields. They were also expected to restrict their behavioral options only to those deemed appropriate for females, therefore, obtaining significantly lower psychological androgyny scores from the BSRI. Conversely, females in non-traditional fields were assumed to be less "stereotypic" in their gender identification and thus expected to obtain significantly higher scores on personality characteristics identified as masculine from the EPPS as well as significantly higher scores on personality characteristics identified as masculine

from the EPPS as well as significantly higher scores on the BSRI.

Method

A random sample of fifty females from the junior and senior classes of nine academic departments were grouped to compose the traditional (education, nursing, and social work), non-traditional (business administration, communications, and pharmacy), and neutral (English, fine arts, and psychology) fields of academic study. Of these subjects sampled, 185 participated in the study. Academic departments were classified into fields according to the ratio of men to women in each. The traditional fields consist of three women to each man, and the reverse is true for the non-traditional fields.

The data collected was derived from the use of the EPPS and the BSRI. The EPPS was employed as the personality variables measured are attributes which have been stereotypically associated with masculinity or femininity. Men and women can reliably be differentiated by this scale and the internal consistency data available were taken as justification for the grouping of the variables into those associated as masculine (achievement, exhibition, autonomy, dominance, change, endurance, aggression) and feminine (deference, order, affiliation, intra-reception, nurturance, heterosexuality, succorance, and abasement).

The BSRI was used as it has been reliable in assessing the degree subjects have internalized socially acceptable sex-role orientations and measures the degree to which they allow themselves a wider behavioral repertoire associated with an androgynous posture.

An analysis of variance was employed to determine differences in

personality variables and psychological androgyny between the three groups of females. To determine between field differences for these variables found significant by the analysis of variance, t-tests were used. In each analysis, the .05 (or beyond) level of significance was used.

Results

Significant differences between the three groups were found on three of the seven personality variables identified as masculine. The non-traditional endurance and the neutral group scored significantly higher on variable autonomy. Table 1 summarizes the results of the data.

Insert Table 1 about here

Significant differences between the three groups were found on three variables identified as feminine. The traditional group scored higher on variables nurturance and affiliation and the non-traditional group scored higher on variable order.

The data indicated that the three groups could also be differentiated by their psychological androgyny scores. Significant differences for the sample group found the non-traditional group demonstrated the highest degree of psychological androgyny, although all three groups fell within the range defined as psychologically androgynous.

Conclusions

Though there were two unexpected reversals in the results, generally the data yielded a consistent and integrated pattern when interpreted jointly. The fact that the neutral group was involved to a considerable degree in the comparisons tended to suggest that the differentiation between the neutral and traditional groups might have been an artificial one. This suggested that the differences were essentially between the traditional and non-traditional groups as anticipated.

Reviewing the data on the personality variables, it became evident that the non-traditional group was associated with less stereotypic characteristics, and thus were more masculine in their orientation. But, when the data from the BSRI was included, it became evident that this pattern was not at the exclusion or rejection of femininity. Though this group of females was preoccupied with a cluster of variables concerned with general striving (achievement, endurance, dominance, and exhibition) it could be interpreted that the values for these behaviors might be restricted to their occupational pursuits and did not dominate their total personality or general orientation. That these individuals have chosen, in an unstereotypic fashion, to gain self-fulfillment and to meet their needs through their own efforts rather than to do so through others, is suggested by lower scores on the feminine personality variables. However, the psychological androgyny scores of this group seemed to indicate that this group allows themselves enough flexibility in behavioral options that they are not restricted by what is traditionally thought of as the "only way to be a real woman."

The traditional sample group displayed a consistent and predictable pattern with respect to the personality variables, scoring on those which place a high value on an "other" outer orientation. These were consistent with their choice of academic study where it would be unlikely that persons without these internalized values would be drawn. However, the psychological androgyny scores of these females tend to suggest that, though these subjects are identifiable with the stereotypic female role as reflected by scores on the personality variables, they have not rejected nor discounted those behaviors deemed exclusively masculine for themselves. In very much the same way as the non-traditional and neutral sample groups, this sample of females associated themselves with the full range of human behavioral options without regard to social definitions of exclusivity.

This must be considered the significant finding of the study. The females in the three fields, thought to be qualitatively different, tended to be more similar than disparate with respect to the behaviors they perceive as appropriate to allow themselves to display and internalize.

Table 1

Analysis of Variance for Personality Characteristics as Measured by the EPPS
and Psychological Androgyny Measured by the BSRI

Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
<u>Masculine</u>					
Achievement	349.49794	2	174.7489	9.575	.001
Autonomy	149.0441	2	74.5220	4.544	.01
Dominance	234.1490	2	117.0745	6.1515	.002
Endurance	303.4618	2	151.7308	6.1763	.003
<u>Feminine</u>					
Order	199.6894	2	99.8447	6.7098	.001
Affiliation	98.4020	2	49.2010	3.4523	.032
Intracception	250.0624	2	125.0312	6.2304	.002
Nurturance	505.3064	2	252.6532	11.4062	.001
Psychological Androgyny	4.4013	2	2.2006	5.0269	.008